

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE  
ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

Meeting of the National Labor Committee

Thursday, October 24, 1946

The first meeting of the National Labor Committee of the NAACP was held on Thursday, October 24, at 11 a.m., in the offices of the Association, 20 West 40th Street, New York City, pursuant to notice.

**Present:** Messrs. Frank Fenton of the American Federation of Labor, Boris Shishkin of the American Federation of Labor, Alfred Baker Lewis, Joseph Waddy representing Charles H. Houston of Washington, the Secretary, the Labor Secretary, the Assistant Secretary, the Administrative Assistant in the New York Office and the Special Counsel, and the Director of Branches. Mr. Walter Reuther had promised to send an alternate, but was unable to do so. However, Mr. Victor Reuther was in the office on other business and stepped in the meeting for a few minutes. He expressed full cooperation of the UAW with the Labor Committee. Mr. George Weaver was unable to be present but sent written approval of the program. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt also sent her approval of the Committee's objectives. A similar letter was received from Father Francis J. Gilligan of St. Paul.

**LABOR DEPARTMENT OBJECTIVES:** The proposed objectives of the Labor Department of the Association as outlined by the Labor Secretary were discussed.

Upon motion, duly seconded, the Committee  
VOTED, To accept the following as objectives of the Labor Department:

1. Elimination of: discriminatory employment practices in industry and government which result in refusal to hire colored workers, wage differentials based on race, unequal opportunities for training and promotion, unfair dismissals, and segregation in employment because of race.
2. Greater participation of colored persons in the trade union movement.
3. Ending of segregated locals, auxiliaries, and any other discriminatory practices in labor unions.
4. Passage of state and federal FEPC legislation.
5. Inclusion of non-discrimination clauses in state and federal laws pertaining to the employment of persons in the execution of government contracts.
6. Joining with labor unions for the enactment of legislation favored by labor for the advancement of wage and welfare standards and for the repealing of unfavorable labor legislation.
7. Expanding and improving opportunities for vocational training on the basis of non-segregation."

**POST-WAR UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG COLORED WORKERS:** In the discussion on this subject, it was pointed out that many Negroes were hired during the war time only because of the pressure of having to get someone to work or pressure from FEPC. In most instances they were the last to be hired and so on the basis of seniority, they are the first to be laid off when there are curtailments in the industry.

There was discussion on the matter of securing figures on the number of Negroes being laid off, downgraded, and presently hired in the various industries. It was pointed out that there is great difficulty in securing such figures as they are not available from usual government sources. The Labor Secretary suggested that if the unions were willing to cooperate such figures might be secured from them.

The Director of Branches asked whether it was inconsistent to fight on one hand to keep unions and government from identifying workers by race on their records and then on the other hand request such information from them. The Special Counsel pointed out that he did not feel this to be inconsistent because even though we are fighting against the keeping of such records, they are being kept in a great many instances.

It was understood that exact figures could not be secured, but it was generally agreed that unions should be contacted and asked to give an approximation. Thus, at least in certain industries where there have been large cutbacks, we would have an idea of what the picture is with regard to Negroes.

Mr. Fenton stated that he felt that we should use as much affirmative action as possible--that is we should try to get representatives on the various boards and committees set up by government and unions so that in that way we will know what is happening. He further stated that he felt the NAACP should work with all groups in its labor program and not single out any particular one.

**SOUTHERN ORGANIZING DRIVES:** By a resolution adopted at the Cincinnati conference in July, the NAACP voted to support the organizing drives of the AFL and CIO in the South.

Mr. Lewis suggested that the National Office should contact all branches in the areas where drives are going on and inform them where they can contact AFL and CIO and urge them to take part in the organizing. It was suggested that heads of the drives in the South should be contacted and asked to furnish NAACP with information about when they are going into certain areas in order that this information can be furnished to branches.

**EMPLOYMENT IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY:** Some information has been secured re shortages of workers by skills in specific areas in the construction industry. The Labor Secretary reported that this information has been sent to the branches with the request that they check to see if it is an accurate picture of their communities. Suggestions have been made as to how they may obtain full use of available skilled colored workers. They are urged to get colored workers to apply to the USCS for jobs in the industry, determine whether they are sent out on any of these jobs, and whether or not they are hired. The branches were also asked to aid in locating colored veterans who performed construction jobs in the armed services.

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Mr. Shishkin reported that there are 12,000 communities set up under the government apprenticeship training program--that in each community there is a labor-management committee. Some larger cities have office set-ups. However, the government has secured only about 60% current reporting from these communities as to what is actually going on. The method of dealing with discrimination in this set up would be through the local USES first, then taking the matter to the local building trades council and the local employers who are on the committee. Many communities have long waiting lists because employers have not been willing to take the responsibility of opening up employment to these men.

Mr. Shishkin suggested that he felt the Association should concentrate mainly on apprentice training for veterans because there might be more leverage there.

It was pointed out that many Negroes are kept from these trades because the unions in the localities where they are will not accept them to membership. It was agreed that this should be worked on. Mr. Shishkin suggested that the situations which offer chances for success should be concentrated on first. Where some have been accepted, try to get more in. Have branches point to the best situations and say this is what should be done.

It was pointed out that the Advisory Committee to General Erskine has adopted a statement of policy which covers non-discrimination. The AFL at its national convention also passed a resolution covering non-discrimination in policy. It was suggested that copies of these two resolutions should be secured and sent to our branches, that armed with these, they may be able to win some of their discrimination battles locally. If not, the suggestion was made that a committee from the top should take up the matter with the particular union. It was agreed, therefore, that when problems arise locally, which cannot be handled locally, the Labor Secretary will take them to the AFL or the CIO representatives on the committee for help from the top.

UNITED STATES EMPLOYMENT SERVICE: The Labor Secretary explained that the whole matter of discrimination in the USES has been taken up with Secretary Schweikert. However, when the states take over the USES once again there is little assurance that there will not be discrimination in many states. The governors of the various states have been written asking what they plan to do to keep discrimination against applicants for employment at a minimum and listing suggestions given to the Secretary of Labor by the NAACP. A few have answered. It is obvious that the South accepts the return of the USES to the states and the announced minority group policy as a complete victory, the Labor Secretary said.

The suggestion was made that we transmit to the branches the recommendations which were made to the Secretary of Labor and to the various states, telling them this is what we have tried to get on a national scale and urging that they fight for such rights locally.

It was agreed that the fight for federalization of the USES should still be pursued. It was stated that the AFL voted to keep on fighting for federalization.

The Labor Secretary pointed out that the Secretary of Labor indicated he would not withdraw federal funds from those states who discriminate because the Department would be open to too much criticism.

The Administrative Assistant suggested that in states where there are fair employment practice laws in effect, it would be well to ask the branches to work with the FEPC set-up in policing the USES to see that there is no discrimination.

The question was asked about possibility of bringing suit in cases of discrimination. Mr. Waddy pointed out that suit might be brought on the grounds that such discrimination is against rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. That would be the only grounds. It was agreed that the possibilities of a legal approach should be explored as a last approach.

LABOR LEGISLATION: Mr. Shishkin announced that in December the Department of Labor holds its conference on labor legislation. Labor union representatives are invited to this conference, and they have opportunity to get across some good things at this time.

The Committee listed a number of bills the passage of which both labor unions and the NAACP are working toward. Included were:

- Anti-Lynching Bill
- Anti-Poll Tax Bill
- FEPC Bill
- Federal Control of the USES
- Fair Labor Standards Act
- Wagner-Elender-Taft Housing Bill
- Federal Aid to Education Bill
- Strengthening of the Civil Rights Act.

Mr. Fenton pointed out that state legislatures need to be watched, and suggested that the NAACP get on state mailing lists so that it might know of new legislation in the states. He also said that the AFL plans to campaign against unfair state legislation.

LABOR EDUCATION: The Labor Secretary stated that he understood that both the AFL and CIO as well as the National Association of Manufacturers and the Chamber of Commerce were to be given free radio time over a period of several weeks to present their programs to the public. He wondered how the NAACP could tie into these programs with the unions in order that the Negro aspect be included as part of the whole and not as a separate part of labor's program.

Mr. Fenton explained that the advertising Council which handled most war-time advertising or propaganda is going to furnish most of material for the AFL and suggested that NAACP contact them.

The Administrative Assistant suggested that we get our branches to secure local radio time over some of the smaller stations and work on labor education in that way.

Mr. Lewis recommended that the Association officially urge its branches to activize their members who are union members. Many belong to unions only because they have to and never take part in union activity. The Branch and Labor Departments should jointly notify the membership of the part that they can and should play in organized labor. Many Negro members are new members and do not know their responsibilities as union members.

SETTING OF MEETING DATES: It was decided that regular meeting dates would not be set up over any long period of time - but it was the consensus that quarterly meetings would be good. It was decided that the tentative date for the next meeting should be Tuesday, January 14, 1947.

The Labor Secretary stated that when issues arose which needed immediate attention, he would contact the Washington members of the Committee, if that were agreeable, for their opinion, mailing the material to the members of the committee who are not in Washington. This was generally agreed to.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Clarence Mitchell  
Labor Secretary